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ABSTRACT

The cultural differences between the countries in which distance education materials are developed and those in which the materials are used make it necessary to conduct a careful content analysis of instructional materials that are intended for use in distance education programs in countries other than the one in which they are being developed. Developers' acts, plans, beliefs, expectations, values, and assumptions about the state, education, society, and humankind act as a life lens through which the developers envision the conceptualization, plan, organization, and development of distance education materials and programs. Care must be taken to assess the appropriateness of program developers' perspectives when materials are used by students in a foreign land or culture and to assess the implications of transferring distance education programs to other cultures. Materials and programs may be developed from a variety of perspectives, including the common sense, technological, theoretic, political, mythical, and illusionary perspectives. When interpreting a program perspective, an analyst can never know the meaning of an object or an act as it is experienced by someone else. With this in mind, developers must carefully analyze their materials and programs to be sure that their impact in a foreign culture will be the one desired. Some of the issues that must be addressed include how the user will interpret any metaphors used, whether the underlying intents of the program or materials will be understandable to the user, whether the implied relationship between teacher and student is the one intended, the ethical implications of the text's descriptions and prescriptions, and the manner in which the program incorporates student input. A 26-item reference list concludes the document. (MN)

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FernUniversität
Gesamthochschule

ZIFF PAPIERE 59

J. Peter Rothe

Phenomenological Analysis of Distance Education Textual Materials

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Perspective / Parameter	Paramount (Common Sense)	Technological	Theoretic	Political	Mythical	Illusionary
Rootmetaphor						
Basic Premise						
Belief						
Guiding Interest						
Legitimization						

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Summary

The need for a carefully conducted content analysis of distance education material arises from intercultural differences between those countries that produce the material and those that acquire it. Moreover there seems to exist a need to be concerned with a theory of distance education and this in turn creates the necessity to gain more detailed insights into the first order constructs of the producers of distance education. Rothe develops a schematic phenomenology of perspective which may elucidate how reality is presented and how it is meant to be understood. According to Rothe parameters of each perspective would consist in semantic hints given by unconscious etymological sub-meanings (root-metaphors), in basic premises, beliefs, guiding interests and legitimizations - all influencing text production. He suggests that a structured content analysis be undertaken according to these parameters from different perspectives.

Zusammenfassung

Nicht nur die interkulturellen Unterschiede zwischen Fernstudienmaterial-entwickelnden Ländern und späteren Abnehmern machen eine sorgfältigere Inhaltsanalyse von Lehrmaterial im Fernstudium notwendig, sondern insbesondere die in letzter Zeit dringender werdende Beschäftigung mit der Theorie des Fernstudiums läßt es notwendig erscheinen, sich eingehender mit dem Vorverständnis (first order constructs) der 'Macher' des Fernstudiums zu befassen. Rothe entwickelt eine schematische Phänomenologie der Perspektive, die Aufschluß geben kann über die Art und Weise, wie eine Wirklichkeit präsentiert wird und verstanden werden soll. Parameter jeder Perspektive wären - nach Rothe - sprachliche Hinweise durch unbewußte etymologische Nebenbedeutungen besonders bei Metaphern sowie Grundannahmen, Überzeugungen, erkenntnisleitende Interessen und legitimatorische Akte bei der konkreten Formulierung von Texten. Vorgeschlagen wird die so strukturierte Inhaltsanalyse für verschiedene Perspektiven.

ZIFF-Papiere

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Introduction

Holmberg (1985) defined distance education as forms of study which are not under continuous, immediate supervision of instructors in classrooms or on campuses, but which are based on planning, guidance and tuition of a tutorial organization. Further, distance study is described as:

> ... those teaching methods in which, because of the physical separateness of learners and teachers, the interactive as well as the pre-active phase of teaching, is conducted through print, mechanical or electronic devices (in Holmberg, 1985, p. 1).

Incorporated within the definition of distance study is a reliance on textual and visual materials. In fact, Holmberg (1985) highlighted the premise that the "printed and written word is usually the main medium of distance education".

Print as a medium for distance education has become an major source for cross-cultural or international distribution. It is often developed in industrialized countries like Germany (FernUniversität), Great Britain (Open University) and the United States (University of Mid-America) and then it is distributed to countries like Canada, Nigeria, Guatemala and Indonesia, whose cultural compositions, daily lifestyles, economic systems, political ideologies, and geographical definitions are dissimilar to the programs' mother country. This may result in incongruence between those belief structures included in a printed program and those of the client nation.

Already, distance educators like Trillo (1982) from Peru, Gupta (1982) from India and Finkel (1982) from Canada have openly questioned the cultural, personal and language implications of distance education course materials. Yet these concerns have not yet reached the high priority they should. For example, distance education materials are usually analyzed according to selected criteria such as effectiveness, appeal, readability, motivation forces, structures of content (e.g. Baukasten-Prinzip), natural order of objectives, internal consistency and the order of knowledge. These categories constitute

a traditional Western way of thinking, comprised of second-order constructs, intended to guarantee academic and instructional design uniformity.
Second-order constructs are formulated on formalized, "official" models, hypotheses or theories (e.g., cybernetics, behaviorism, psycholinguistics etc.). They stress curriculum design, scholarship, rationality, technique, and educational tradition, resulting in analyses which encourage "quality" products that are "academically" consistent with "current educational" thinking and "packaged" in an appealing persuading manner.

However, underlying second-order constructs are a series of first order constructs such as the program developers' acts, plans, beliefs, expectations, values and assumptions about the state, education, society and man. These constructs represent political, geographic, social, cultural or economic perspectives. The may be viewed as the life lenses through which program developers envision the conceptualization, plan, organization and development of distance education materials. They are most often implied in a text or visual display, or as Freire wrote:

> All educational practice implies a theoretical stance on the educator's part. This stance in turn implies - sometimes more, sometimes less explicitly - an interpretation of man and the world. It could not be otherwise. (Freire, 1970: 205,206).

Apple (1974), Freire (1970) and Greene (1973) outlined that first-order constructs underlying education programs affect students' observations, interpretations and their consequent actions in their studies, places of employment, communities and other personal actions. They have major implications for the students' lives. Because of these concerns content analysis of distance education texts should be undertaken. Rather than focussing an second-order constructs, the analysis should concentrate on first-order constructs. For this purpose a phenomenological analysis is suggested.

WHY A PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF DISTANCE EDUCATION TEXTS

Distance education texts include a series of pre-organized schemes and implicit or explicit perspectives on the subject. Students adopt these for responding to life events. They may use metaphors found in the program to interpret the social world, labels for constructing social reality, exemplars of reasoning for applying sense-making of phenomena, and values for judging worth. If students wish to successfully complete a distance education program, they are expected to adopt a curriculum developer's textual prescriptions and perspectives.

A distance education program is developed within a developer's perspective, which reflects a group (distance educators). According to Kuhn (1970) their perspective becomes the paradigm of operation. This results in a closed community, insulated from external social influence, for its tradition of theories, knowledge and skills is derived from the exemplar unique to them. Students from another culture or society, who assimilate a program developer's "licensed and tested way of seeing" become initiated, often involuntarily, into a pre-established tradition (Werner, 1977). Their initiation may not allow them to:

> ... study alternative approaches or conceptual structures, neither does it invite nor equip them to evaluate the tradition (perspective) itself (brackets added) (Kuhn, 1972: 85).

Students may be forced to become committed to one paradigm or perspective. Yet, according to Kuhn (1970) exclusiveness of one paradigm results in isolation from competing world views, because they may be incompatible with one another. The program developer's perspective may be so dominant as to monopolize a reality definition. The extent to which a program developer's perspective is stressed becomes a question for analysis.

A phenomenological analysis of text marked for use in a foreign culture will "describe":

1. the program developers' perspective underlying written text

2. the appropriateness of the program developers' perspective when studied by students of a foreign land or culture

3. the "possible" implications of transferring a distance education program to another culture

4. the relationship between program developers and students as implied within text.

A PHENOMENOLOGY OF PERSPECTIVE

From a phenomenological point of view every person stands in some relation to the world. This directedness implies an ontology of mind as a subject-object relationship rather than a self-contained entity in which the subject is separated from the object (Werner, 1977). This relationship is considered a perspective. As Shibutani wrote:

> an ordered view of one's world; what is taken for granted about the attributes of various objects, events and human nature. It is an order of things remembered and expected as well as actually perceived, an organized conception of what is plausible and what is possible; it constitutes a matrix through which one perceives his environment (1967: 76).

The following example offered by Mercer and Wanderer portrays the concept of perspective.

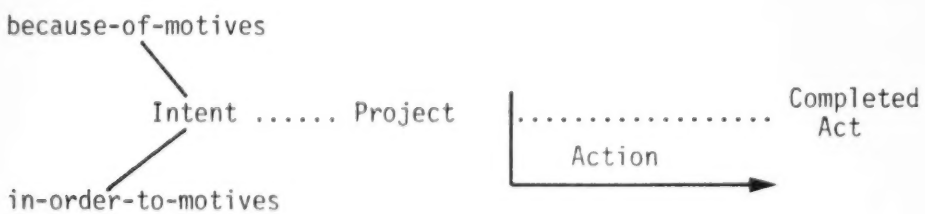
> Imagine a tree. The carpenter sees it in terms of the number of planks which can be cut out of it to build a house; the boy sees it as a place to build his play house; the biologist sees it as a living organism; the exologist sees it in terms of its relations to other plants and animals in the area; and the artist sees it in terms of its aesthetic values. There is no doubt that the same thing

> is alway involved - the same real tree. What differs among these perspectives is not the object of the various interests but simply the interests themselves. Certain properties or aspects of the tree are taken into account by the separate observers, while other aspects are neglected. The whole tree still stands; only what is said about it changes (emphasis added) (Mercer and Wanderer, 1970: 3).

Those perspectives on man developed within the social locations inhabited by program developers are transmitted to students within programs through identifiable reality coordinates (reality parameters, boundary points, or limitations) which confine the extent of a reality view. These coordinates provide the outer survey pegs, as it were, within which legitimate reality concerning man is to be constructed in programs, and according to which the student's experience of the social world is to be oriented (Werner, 1977).

Phenomenological Rationale of Perspectives

Phenomenologically, perspectives are possible through the following line of reasoning described by Schutz:



According to Schutz (1970) an action is conscious in the sense that before it is carried out, the actor has a picture in his mind of what he is to do. This is his project or projected act. The projected act is always characterized by an intent or basic purpose or primary interest in seeing the completed act. Underlying intentionality are two forms of motives which give meaning to acts. In-order-to motives are what gives direction to acts and because-of motives are what gives justification and reason for acts.

The motives underlying an act give meaning to the act. For example, an observer sees a rich man giving a poor man $ 500.00. This may be described in terms of altruism, charity, goodness or kindness. However, if the rich man's in-order-to motive is to gain a tax deduction for the donation, the meaning of the act may change to financial planning. Further, if the rich man's presentation of $ 500.00 is based on the motive that he has a poor sociotal image and a gift will give him a better image, the presentation of $ 500.00 may now mean the manufacture of a person's image, or self-worth. Each motive shifts the meaning of the act yet the act of giving $ 500.00 remains an objective reality.

The motives and intents capture the perspective since they encompass basic beliefs and premises, guiding interests, an assumed order of the world, a basis for interpreting the world or a segment thereof, and a situatedness.

Multiple Perspectivism

The concept of multiple perspectivism is grounded in the following Schutz quote:

> ... first that we are liable to think differently of the same object; and secondly, that when we have done so, we can choose which way of thinking to adhere to and which to disregard. The origin and fountainhead of all reality ... is thus subjective, is ourselves. Consequently, there exist several, probably an infinite number of various orders of reality, each with its own special and separate style of existence (Schutz, 1971: 135).

The world remains, though the actors' apprehension of it varies in accord with their changing purposes. Each perspective is the same world experienced by someone from different angles, and differentiated from other perspectives on the basis of the schemes of reference which are brought to it and which guide ones experience of it (Schutz, 1970). Though one must stand in some relation to an object, that relation or that perspective of the object can very as it is differently experienced or defined.

Formalized distance education programs are characterized by their particular organization of the world and are thereby representative of multiple perspectives within which educators, tutors/mentors and students participate. A student in Canada working on a wheat farm leaves the farm and may suddenly enter a theoretic perspective of a distance education administration program developed in Hagen/West Germany, or New York/United States. He experiences a major shift in perspective. In the first reality his acts of working have a meaning shared with other farmhands, geographic features such as soil and climate, family members and neighbours, often from a similar ethnic background (e.g. Ukrainian), whereas in the latter reality his experiences are mediated and integrated through a perspective which may include theoretical schemes, models, language and abstract logic.

The social world and man are experienced always within the confines of multiple perspectives. Each perspective has its own characteristic parameters such as root metaphors, basic premises, guiding interests, world views, belief systems and legitimations.

CLARIFICATION OF PERSPECTIVE PARAMETERS

Each perspective includes a set of identifiable parameters. To provide a clearer identification of perspective some of the more relevant and obvious parameters need to be clarified.

1. Root Metaphors

   Language is the instrument through which program developers transmit their perspectives. The language includes a set of metaphors which screen the world or filter the perception by suppressing some facts and accepting others (Turbayne, 1962). Metaphors have fringes or halos of emotional values, implications, connotations and shades of meaning which reflect a perspective.

2. Basic Premise

   Basic premise refers to the line of reasoning which supports the perspective in use.

3. Beliefs

   Beliefs in the context of this analysis are the feeling of rationality in the absoluteness of the perspective. With a belief there tends to be no need to explain or justify the perspective (Edie, 1965).. They are the cause maps that people impose on the world after which they "see" what they have already imposed (Lotto, 15).

4. Guiding Interests

   Guiding interests are the fundamental intents people have of a perspective. These intents are the reasons why a perspective has been adopted, is preferred and is furthered in programs.

5. Legitimizations

   Legitimizations "explain" the institutional order by ascribing cognitive validity to its objectivated meaning. They justify the perspective by giving a normative dignity to its practical imperatives.

Description of Selected Perspectives

Following are selected multiple perspectives which are relevant in international distance education and which may be identified within distance education programs. Each perspective is described according to key parameters.

Paramount Perspective/Common-Sense Perspective

The paramount perspective is that of the lived world. That is how students' and developers' focus on the here and now, space and time; and how they perceive their immediate surroundings or context in common-sense, everyday terms. Experience, tradition, family and community are recognized in immediate relevant terms. For example, a person eats on tables (not aggregates of molecules or appropriate decorating design), turns on lights (not a stream of photons, or displaced return of labour in the factory) and speaks to people (not complex homeostatic bio systems or behavioral gratification) (Lazlo, 1972).

Root Metaphors

Distance-education programs featuring a predominant common-sense perspective may use such root metaphors as consensus, situation, relevance, meaning, experience, context, and dialogue.

Basic Premise

A basic premise of common-sense perspective is that the everyday world is comprised of emotions, motives, hopes, disappointments and interests. Such human features provide meaning to the individual.

Beliefs

An important belief is that man makes sense of situations to exist. Man is the namer of his world. His consciousness is active rather than passive.

Guiding Interests

The guiding interest of structuring a program on a common-sense perspective is to discern or portray the everyday interpretation, sense-making and judgements of individuals as they provide meaning in life.

Legitimizations

Language and thought are understood and interpreted within a person's context. Context and situations are paramount for understanding man.

Technological Perspective

The technological perspective features man and the social world in terms of various ends-means. Emphasis is on those methods, treatments, remedial acts and rules based upon the interests of control, certainty, efficiency and predictability of outcomes (Werner, 1977).

Root Metaphors: The technological perspective includes such root metaphors as cost effectiveness, student/program/behavioral objectives, mastery of learning, formula, discrepancy model, and correlation.

Basic Premise: Underlying the technological perspective is the basic premise that technological rationality is the mainstay of man's social world relationships.

Beliefs: Relevant beliefs are that expertise is the ability to apply proper techniques, technical knowledge is irreducible to any other, increased and efficient production is a major goal, and competent skillful manipulation is possible through an input-output model of education.

Guiding Interests: Examples of guiding interests are to dominate a part of the world in order to produce, destroy, safeguard, organize, plan, communicate or disseminate. Encompassing the guiding interests are the acceptance or increasing capabilities found within behaviorism, cybernetics, social engineering, and techno-industrialism.

Legitimizations: The technological perspective is usually legitimized in terms of traditional theses offered by cybernetics, systems theories, and cognitive psychology. The appropriateness of goals and cognitive objectives are taken as "givens".

Theoretic Perspective

The theoretic perspective as a basis for program development is derived primarily from the general domains of philosophy and science. A set of coordinates is provided which is assumed to be more valid to define man - social world relationships - than others. The perspective of theory is experienced by students primarily in terms of methodological rules, laws, formulas, correlations and causal relations. The world is grasped through formal concepts whose relationship to the informal conceptions of common-sense become increasingly problematic.

Root Metaphors: Examples of root metaphors found within the theoretic perspective are problem-solving, hypotheses, theories, explanations, logic, scientific methodology, reliability and validity, research problems, controlled/uncontrolled variables and experimentation.

Basic Premise: Objective knowledge is true knowledge, and true knowledge is distinguishable from belief. True knowledge involves an understanding of ways in which objects are related. The scientific method is the fundamental process for arriving at true knowledge.

Beliefs: A fundamental belief is that there is a rational order of phenomena. Science is the bona fide process for studying and explaining the phenomena.

Guiding Interests: A major interest of the theoretic perspective is the explanation of relationships through objective scientific research.

Legitimizations: The bona fide acceptability of science to investigate relationships is a lay legitimation based on tradition and paradigmatic continuity.

Political Perspective

Distance-education programs, built on a political perspective, feature a concern for state or social group action. It is derived primarily from citizenship, group belonging, or organization.

Root Metaphors: Relevant metaphors are leadership, confrontation, social classes/structures, conflict, policy, citizenship, society, common-good, ... isms, and organization.

Basic Premise: The basic premise is social action which may or may not deal with the functioning of a state, organization or social situation.

Beliefs: The basic belief is that man is a social being who defines himself in relation to others. The definition with others is in a form of structure.

Guiding Interests: The interests can be one of two; one is that the given interest of a group is intended to be passively accepted by the individual for harmony, the other is that the group is a reified organization emposing on the freedom of the individuals. Therefore, the individual needs to become active in changing the group.

Legitimizations: The key ligitimization is the sui generis structure of a group whether it be an organization, institution or state.

Mythical Perspective

The mythical perspective is located in myth, ritual, symbol, song and theology. Whenever this perspective predominates other perspectives such as everyday life and theory may be suspended.

Root Metaphors: Some root metaphors are commitment, transcendence, encounter, myth, faith, harmony, consciousness and belief.

Basic Premise: The basic premise of the mythical perspective is that the world is comprised of wide non-hypothetical truths.

Beliefs: A basic belief is that there is a mystical relationship between man and the world. Man as a being is transcendent.

Guiding Interest: A major interest of the mythical perspective is the exaltation of individuals gaining a spiritual, holistic, transcendent appreciation of the world.

Legitimizations: Man has a soul and spirituality. There is an unquestioned acceptance of saving his soul and living in harmony with environment.

Illusionary Perspective

An illusionary perspective in distance-education programs portrays reality through the realms of fiction, theatre, novels, plays and simulations.

Root Metaphors: Examples of root metaphors are orientation, portrayals, creative interpretation and literary appreciation.

Basic Premise: The basic premise is that the world is a stage comprised of images and symbolic acts.

Beliefs: Key beliefs are that man's creative acts reign supreme over his search for identity and exploration. Creativity and artistry is man's place in existence. He is able to be apart from it to interpret it.

Guiding Interests: The guiding interest is to illustrate man's relationship to the world through artistic displays.

Legitimizations: A recognizeable legitimization is that the object of creative expression is a symbolic representation of existence.

RELEVANCE AND PERSPECTIVE

In short, relevance is the importance ascribed by an individual to selected aspects, etc., of specific situations and of his activities and plans (Schutz, 1971). Schutz defined two types of relevance systems, intrinsic and imposed relevances, which are applicable to understanding how students experience distance-education programs. The intrinsic contours of relevance established by students living in different cultural enclaves or societies are the outcomes of their chosen interest at hand:

> The intrinsic relevances are the outcomes of our chosen interests, established by our spontaneous decision to solve a problem by our thinking, to attain a goal by our action, to bring forth a projected state of affairs. Surely we are free to choose what we are interested in, but this interest, once established, determines the system of relevances intrinsic to the chosen interest. We have to put up with the relevances thus set, to accept the situation determined by their internal structure, to comply with their requirements (Schutz, 1971: 126).

For example, a student living in the Canadian north, contemplating a plan for a job in a Native Indian school may find the perspective of a distance-education program on culture developed in Los Angeles/ California occupying little relevance for him. If he were to shift his interest to that of, for example, learning about the traditional ways of the Incas and Aztecs, then the intrinsic relevances to that choice would change. If that student wishes to teach Native Indian students to become emancipated, then a program with a technological perspective on how to properly develop administrative procedures would be of questionable relevance.

A distance-education program as a completed act represents developer's relevances to his chosen perspective, of which the student now becomes a recipient. Problems, goals, objectives, theories, questions, problems, etc. are defined for him as being relevant although not connected with his own chosen interests, views or goals. He may therefore transform the imposed

> relevances into intrinsic ones, thereby aligning his interests with those of the program developer and choosing to do the social studies which he may have no power to modify anyway. Or, secondly, he may intermingle the two in varying extents, modifying the imposed system and accepting it as a necessary means to fulfulling his own intrinsic relevances. Thirdly, he may consider the program as an imposed act, as that which has little to do with his own chosen goals, and consequently consider it as uninteresting, difficult, or just not worth pursuing.
> (Werner, 1977)

HERMENEUTIC ANALYSIS OF PERSPECTIVES IN DISTANCE EDUCATION PRINTED MATERIALS

In interpreting a program perspective an analyst can never know the meaning of an object or an act as it is experienced by someone else because the other is "there" and he is "here" (Werner, 1977). He can only experience textual expressions as they express meaning. This experience comprises Spiegelberg's three phenomenologies:

1. Direct exploration, analysis, and description of particular phenomena, as free as possible from unexamined presuppositions, aiming at maximum intuitive presentation: I shall call this 'descriptive phenomenology'.

2. Probing of these phenomena for typical structures or essences and for the essential relations within and among them; this can be called 'phenomenology of essences', or even shorter but, perhaps, more riskily, essential (eidetic) phenomenology.

3. Giving attention to the ways in which such phenomena appear, e.g., in different perspectives or modes of clarity, to be called here 'phenomenology of appearances' (1970: 18-19).

As a completed act, a distance-education program is a field of expression of somebody's perspective. During the hermeneutic circle the analyst infers perspective and meaning from observing the developer's field of expression.

Through the hermeneutic circle whereby the meaning of individual parts is yielded an understanding of the sense of the whole, which in term changes the indeterminateness of the words into a fixed and meaningful pattern, a meaning of program text is possible. The analyst can then determine the perspective of the program.

When one analyzes text one places symbols into increasingly larger context such as sentences, paragraphs, pages, chapters and books. One then relates

the symbol to one's context, historical/temporal situation (Here, Now and Then). To attain a greater intersubjective understanding or profile of the program writer's perspective the analyst immerses himself in the text and on the basis of his own experiences asks text questions. Some "sample" questions are:

1. What kind of perspective do significant metaphors indicate?
2. What are the implications of using metaphors?
3. Why and how are certain metaphors used?
4. When, where and why was the text written or explicated?
5. What are the underlying intents of the program?
6. What knowledge was selected and neglected?
7. What is the developers' basic relationship to students as implied in the text?
8. What are the prominent behaviors expected of the students and how do they reflect the interests of the developer's perspective?
9. How does the program pedagogy compare to relevant educational literature on pedagogy?
10. How is the program structured to fit into students' larger community or national contexts?
11. How is learning defined against the background of alternative learning strategies?
12. What are the ethical implications of the text's descriptions and/or prescriptions?
13. How does the program incorporate student input?

To answer such questions the analyst may cluster structures of reasoning within the text which signify the characteristics of content, language devices such as metaphors, typifications and stereotypes which serve as standards, statements of values, judgments, worth and ethics which qualify a text, and trends which signify intention, motive or purpose of the text. Also, the analyst should investigate the Here and Now of the text by reviewing academic tradition within which a text was written, political ideology relevant at the time of development, institutional policies and cultural patterns. The context descriptions should then be related to the text analysis. A comprehensive description of perspective should evolve.

Conclusion

Critical sense making through the use of a phenomenological framework serves as the interpretive lens for describing first-order constructs supporting distance-education programs. The framework provides the concepts from which questions can be generated for inquiring into the foundations of programs.

Such an inquiry is necessary, especially when a program is intended for different cultures, social enclaves or nationalities. It helps distance educators become aware of wider possible consequences a program may have. They can better judge the appropriateness of a program for their student clientele.

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